

# GOV. JAY INSLEE'S EXECUTIVE ORDER

## TRANSFORMING SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN WASHINGTON STATE

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### *Why is creation of a new department necessary?*

- » Children are one of our most important priorities, yet children's services are currently a part of one of the state's largest state agencies — the Department of Social & Health Services. The governor believes that just as we have departments dedicated to priorities such as education and natural resources, a department that specifically focuses on children's services will help us achieve better outcomes for the children and families we serve.
- » A new cabinet-level department will create a direct line to the governor and the Legislature. This will promote a sharper focus and visibility on children's welfare issues and also improve accountability. These are benefits that we've seen from creating the Department of Early Learning (DEL). Other states with separate children's departments have also seen improved outcomes. For instance, Tennessee has seen notable improvement in outcomes for children involved in the juvenile justice system. The governor hopes the same will be true of this new department.

### *Isn't this simply rearranging the deck chairs?*

- » This is about a fundamental change in the structure of state government to improve the lives of children and provide improved transparency and accountability in how we provide services to this vulnerable population.
- » Similar actions take place all the time in the private sector — companies restructure or form strategic partnerships to improve business. This is the same approach.
- » Ultimately, the Legislature must approve creation of a separate department.

### *What agencies and functions will be included in this new structure?*

- » How we move forward is incredibly important. This kind of change requires careful consideration and planning which is why Governor Inslee is creating a Blue Ribbon Commission instead of simply proposing legislation. The Commission must provide recommendations regarding the structure and functions for the new department.

### *What will this cost?*

- » There will be a small cost to hire a person or contract with someone to lead the Commission's work. One of the Commission's tasks will be to identify costs of setting up the new agency.

### *Is this because there are problems with DSHS that you are trying to solve?*

- » This isn't about solving a problem — it's about finding a way to do something better. Under the leadership of DSHS's Children's Administration and Juvenile Justice programs as well as DEL, we have seen great changes. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't strive for continuous improvement, and that is Governor Inslee's goal.

### *Why study this again?*

- » This isn't a study about if we should do this, it's an assessment of how to do it.
- » In 2007, the Joint Task Force on Administration and Delivery to Services of Children and Families did an extensive review and they recommended a separate department. We have early indications of success from other states that have taken similar steps. Governor Inslee believes the evidence makes a clear case for moving forward. The Commission will prepare the plan for how to get there.

### *Who will be on the Commission and when will they be meeting?*

- » Governor Inslee and legislative leaders will be making appointments as quickly as possible. The Commission will include legislators, family law and juvenile justice leaders, subject matter experts, tribal governments, and others. Additional workgroups will be convened to ensure as inclusive a process as possible with input from community-based providers, youth, foster and adoptive parents and parent allies.
- » As soon as meetings are scheduled, the governor's office will post a webpage where all meeting information will be available.